

Financial Administration Act

We take it that persons employed in the public service are proud to be in it. I am rising to ask one or two questions which have not been answered to the satisfaction of employees in the public service, the public or some of the supervisors and administrators of the public service. I ask the minister, with respect to this section related to discipline and so on, are certain standards of deportment and dress required in the public service of Canada? Are they required in all branches of the service?

This has been brought to my attention. In my own constituency we have a young man who was employed as a postman, you see, and there was a dreadful uproar because he went round with the post, delivering the rural mail wearing this postal hat, with his hair down over his shoulders. There was a proper hullabaloo. I might tell the minister that I am inclined to be always on the side of discipline in cases of this kind.

● (9:20 p.m.)

Then again, there is the question of miniskirts in the public service. Are there any standards applied? I am not asking about anything reasonable, but suppose some female employee turns up in anything which might be considered quite outrageous. Are there any standards in this respect? I am lately informed that in some departments of the public service young ladies have arrived in their offices with skirts so short that it has been necessary to put screens in front of their desks. I should like the minister to make inquiries into this. Are there any standards about dress, or with respect to the length of hair and so on? Miniskirts and long hair can be very diverting and provocative in certain circumstances. I am one of those who believe there should be certain standards of dress and deportment required in the public service of Canada and I should like the minister to tell the committee whether there are any standards in this respect at the present time. I ask, not for my own information, but for the information of the public in general, the employees, and in some instances the supervisors who are responsible for the various branches of the public service.

Mr. Baldwin: Also whether they affect the security and safety of the country.

Mr. Benson: There are certain requirements in the public service with regard to those who wear uniforms in the public service, and I believe there are certain standards with respect to the general appearance of

[Mr. Herridge.]

those employed. But these are presently administered by departments. I was about to say somewhat facetiously that our standards with regard to miniskirts are pretty high.

But of course this is a serious matter. People in the public service may be expected to report at their work dressed as properly as people in other walks of life in Canada. I do not think the standards in the public service need to be any higher or lower than that. As I say, these questions are at present handled by the departments. For example I received a note from my deputy minister the other day asking whether it would be all right for our customs inspectors to grow beards in areas where beards are being grown as part of the centennial celebrations. I replied that since others in the area were growing beards there seemed no harm in our inspectors growing them as well.

The purpose of these two paragraphs in the bill is really to take important matters affecting personnel administration having to do with standards of discipline and move them into the jurisdiction of Treasury Board, where we could get some sort of standard established throughout the civil service.

In addition I would point out that any standards which are set under the collective bargaining procedure might at the ultimate include standards with respect to hair length and skirt length and would be subject to the normal grievance procedures; if someone disagreed with a decision which was made by the Treasury Board when giving instructions to departments, he or she would be able to go through the normal grievance procedure and the matter would ultimately be determined by adjudication under the terms of Bill C-170.

Mr. Herridge: I thank the minister for his reply, but in fairness to the public and to the employees could the minister provide us with copies of the standards established in the various departments by the deputy ministers or departmental heads?

Mr. Benson: I can undertake to try to do this. I do not know how far these standards are written out in the various departments. One of the purposes of this legislation is to make sure that in future we have something in writing and administered by the various departments.

Clause agreed to.

Clauses 4 and 5 agreed to.